

Chains

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Summary: Mulder contemplates why he is the way he is... deep, huh?

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Summary: Mulder contemplates why he is the way he is... deep, huh?
Author's Note: No, this is NOT a bondage story... (looks over at red fuzzy handcuffs with a sly grin)... maybe next time..
Spoilers: Well, if you haven't seen the Second Season, you might not wanna read this... but that's all...

Chainsby Sheryl Martin

Taking his glasses off wearily, Fox Mulder pinched the bridge of his nose, sighing deeply. No matter how advanced the technology got; he still liked to read the actual book instead of surfing the Web; or going to the library through electronic magic. Putting the thick volume down on his table, he leaned back on the couch and stared at the ceiling.

Another quiet night.

Another lonely night.

It bothered him at times; the solitary life he led. Sometimes it threatened to overwhelm him; to rip him apart with the silence inside his mind and inside his empty world. But he had learnt at an early age that if you displayed a weakness, someone would exploit it.

And they had.

His mind flashed suddenly to Phoebe Green and his time at Oxford; his mouth turning up at the bittersweet memories. She had played him like a fine instrument, knowing just which keys to touch and stroke to produce the right sounds. And at the end, he had walked away a little wiser and with a great deal of respect for matters of the heart. Phoebe had managed to do something no one else had up to that point - break his heart; but he had learned a valuable lesson from her.

Trust no one.

True, he used it now in a different context, but with her it had first really hit home; the loneliness of his path. He couldn't afford to let any chinks appear in his armour for the enemy to exploit.

And he had done well, until a few years ago. And he hadn't even realised it until it had almost been too late.

Scully.

His partner.

With a sigh he reached for the drink sitting on the table beside him, taking a deep sip and concentrating on the liquid slipping down his throat. A memory sprang up from his school days again, this one much more painful. So to speak.

Mulder hadn't ever gone in for the usual sports at university; his basketball love kept to private games and television. But one time he had been dragged, literally, into a rugby game by a teacher who thought that the shy quiet boy-man needed some physical release. Some healthy physical release.

The resulting scrum had terrified him beyond all else - pressed together in a writhing mass of bodies all trying to get to the ball and moving back and forth in a primitive dance of violence. Someone had kicked out and nailed him in the left shin; wrenching a howl of pain from him as he had tried to disengage from the mob. But he couldn't get free, and when they had finally moved away to pursue the game he had been left lying on the field; holding his knee where the blood had started to flow. And he realised then that he didn't like to work with people and he didn't like not being in charge and he didn't like not being able to hit back and he didn't like playing this game when there wasn't anything logical about it and he didn't like that Phoebe was on the sidelines laughing and pointing at him and helping him off the field to the medical office. He didn't like it at all because it showed where he wasn't strong; where he was weak.

Weaknesses. They could kill you.

They nearly did. He almost lost Scully because someone had noticed how attached he had become to her; how he had accepted her into his sanctuary and his world. How she had become the only person that he could trust.

And that fact had almost killed her and sent him spiralling down into a dark well of hatred.

He glanced over to the pistol sitting snugly in the holster atop the desk. So close...

With a deep sigh he swung his legs back over the edge of the couch onto the floor and got to his feet. And they knew his greatest fear was that they would take her again; rip her out of his life like they had Samantha so many years ago.

But something had changed in all those years. He knew it when he confronted the Pilot on the bridge and traded the woman he thought was his sister for his partner. A few years earlier the thought wouldn't have entered his mind; the scene unthinkable. He would have refused the trade and negotiated something else, something that wouldn't have put Samantha in danger.

And even though it had turned out not to be Sam, the feelings racing through his heart and soul had scared him beyond words and belief when he realised how much Scully meant to him.

A weakness.

One they knew about. And would use against him again, if they could.

Picking up the book again and reaching for his glasses, he slumped into the leather cushions and flipped the pages. The thoughts racing to the top of his mind sank back; dragged down into the quiet by the invisible chains that kept them there.

Held them there. Until it was safe.

Safe to be vulnerable.

Safe to be weak.

Safe to be true to himself and his heart.

His eyes didn't focus on the page, straying instead to the phone on the desktop. One day he'd be able to pick it up and make that phone call. But until then...

The phone rang, startling him. Jumping off the couch, he snatched up the receiver.

"Mulder..."

"Mulder, it's Scully..." He could hear the frown in her voice. "You were going to call me tonight with the finances on that last case - remember? I'm emailing them right now to beat the deadline..."

He smiled. "Oh, right... let me look around here..." Reaching into his wallet, Mulder pulled out a handful of credit card receipts.

"Ready?"

"As ready as I ever am, Mulder..." He could imagine her smiling even as the exasperation came through in her voice. "As ready as I ever am with you around, that is..."

With a chuckle he reached for the first piece of paper in the pile.

"All right, Scully - let's take it from the top..."

"In order to live free and happily, you must sacrifice boredom. It is not always an easy sacrifice." Richard Bach - "Illusions"

End
file.